

Hobbs, NM – Over the weekend, Congressman Harry Teague attended the Hatch Chile Parade and Festival and visited the Ogaz Chile Farm to meet with local farmers and producers to discuss his newest piece of agriculture legislation, the Specialty Crop Enhancement Act. The Act will increase the funding available for the USDA's Specialty Crop Block grant program in efforts to encourage the competitiveness of local specialty crops. Some of the issues that will be addressed as a result of the legislation include improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems, investing in specialty crop research, and fostering organic and sustainable production practices.

“Not only are New Mexican specialty crops a part of our vibrant culture, they are also crucial to the growth and success of the local economy. Increased markets for chile and other specialty crops will benefit local farmers and create local jobs,” Harry Teague said. “By bolstering the Specialty Crop grant program, we give our local farmers and agriculture producers the boost they need to grow and succeed in the market.”

The bill introduced by Teague is an amendment to the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 that would double the amount of funds of the Commodity Credit Corporation available for specialty crop block grants. During the 2009 fiscal year, programs implemented through this law helped to promote the agriculture sector in New Mexico through initiatives like New Mexico State University's efforts to provide consumers with information about safe packaging and the time-frame needed to freeze roasted long green chile. Another program funded a fulltime New Mexico Department of Agriculture employee to enhance the competitiveness of all specialty crops at distributor, national and international trade shows.



*Harry Teague examines this year's chili crop during a visit to the Ogaz Chile Farm in Hatch.*